**AAPA Communications Awards Submission**

**Category: Advertisements**

**Summary of Entry:** A digital ad campaign specifically targeted to IP Addresses connected to the Virginia General Assembly with the intent to increase awareness of The Port of Virginia and its economic impact.

1. **What are/were the entry’s specific communications challenges or opportunities?**

The effort to make the Norfolk Harbor wider, deeper, and safer took a significant step forward in January when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approved the National Economic Development (NED) plan.

The approved plan recommends deepening Norfolk Harbor to 55 feet, Thimble Shoal Channel to 56 feet, the Atlantic Ocean Channel to 59 feet, and widening Thimble Shoal Channel east of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel from 1,000 to 1,300 feet.

The Port of Virginia has requested $20 million in funding from the General Assembly to begin the Preliminary Engineering & Design (PED) portion of the project. Further, we have asked for $330 million to cover the costs of the entire project (state AND federal contributions) in order to expedite the project timeline.

1. **How does the communication used in this entry complement the organization’s overall mission?**

In FY17, the first 10,700TEU, 13,000TEU and 14,000TEU vessels to call the US East Coast made their initial calls at The Port of Virginia. Ocean carriers continue to consolidate and send larger vessels to fewer ports in order to maximize the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of their operations. It is critical to our future that we are able to accommodate the largest vessels, and the volumes they carry, in order to remain a competitive and viable option for carriers and their customers.

1. **What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?**

Working with a marketing and advertising agency, we created a series of 4 digital ads that were displayed on mobile devices that were connected to IP addresses with the two buildings of the Virginia General Assembly.

In addition to the digital ads, we also created a vanity URL – [www.morevirginiajobs.com](http://www.morevirginiajobs.com) – that featured a brief article on the benefits of being able to bring in fully-laden large container vessels, and short videos from the Chief Operations Officer of CMA-CGM (America) and the Commander of Sector Hampton Roads for the US Coast Guard. Both spoke of the importance of having deep, wide shipping channels to enable safe, two-way passage of vessels through our harbor. The site also contained a link to our recent Annual Report.

1. **What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?**
   1. **Explain what strategies were developed to achieve success and why these strategies were chosen.**

We created a digital ad campaign specifically targeted to IP Addresses connected to the Virginia General Assembly with the intent to increase awareness of The Port of Virginia and its economic impact as we were asking for funding support of our dredging initiatives to bring in the largest container vessels calling on the East Coast.

* 1. **Specify the tactics used (i.e., actions used to carry out your strategies).**

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* 1. **Detail the entry’s implementation plan by including timeline, staffing and outsourcing used.**

Working with an advertising an digital media agency, we ran the advertisements from January 9 – February 28, the bulk of the general assembly session.

1. **What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?**

In total, the General Assembly placements drove 981,463 impressions and 2,672 clicks for a CTR of 0.27%. The mobile placements (300x250, 300x50 and 320x50) performed the best, achieving a CTR of 0.30%. We optimized out of the 160x600 placement as of February 7th as it was driving the lowest engagement. The best performing desktop placement was the 300x250 size banner with a CTR of 0.31% while the best performing mobile placement was the 300x250 size banner with a CTR of 0.34%. Further, we drove nearly 2,000 unique visitors to the morevirginiajobs.com site.

On March 10, the General Assembly ended its session without having reached agreement on a budget. However, both houses of the General Assembly and the Governor have all included $20 million in their respective budgets for the PED. The assembly goes back into session in early May, and we are hopeful that at least a portion of the $330 is also included so that we can continue to move forward with this critical project.